

By Jim Galloway

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My AJC colleague Bob Keefe in Washington was in charge of monitoring “date-night” logistics last night, during President Barack Obama’s State of the Union address:

[O]ne of the most dramatic seating arrangements involved two Georgians. Democratic Rep. John Lewis of Atlanta, one of the House’s most liberal members, chose to sit next to Republican Rep. Tom Price of Roswell, one of the House’s most conservative members. The two sat right next to the Republican leadership table, where Price had a reserved seat. Price is chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee; Lewis is Chief Deputy Whip for Democrats.

Democratic Rep. Hank Johnson of Lithonia, as is his practice, didn’t pick out a seat until arriving at the speech – and he apparently almost missed getting one. Instead, he ended up seated with several senators on the Republican side of the House floor, one row in front of Republican Rep. Joe Wilson of South Carolina and next to Democratic Sen. Jim Webb of Virginia. After the president stopped speaking, he took a picture of Wilson and several House Democrats who were seated together.

As a former House member, Sen. Saxby Chambliss knows well where Democrats and Republicans sit in the chamber and who typically sits where. He ended up sitting on the Democratic side of the chamber, in an area where Georgia Democrats Lewis and Sanford Bishop of Albany typically sit. Seated beside Chambliss: Democratic Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota on one side and Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia on the other.

Right in the middle of the House chamber for Tuesday’s speech – fittingly so – were Democratic Reps. Bishop and John Barrow of Savannah. The two relatively conservative Democrats often vote with Republicans. Sitting between the two Democrats was another Georgian, Republican Rep. Jack Kingston of Savannah. Bishop, who took the aisle seat, stayed behind after the president ended his speech so he could get Obama to autograph a copy of his speech.

Democratic Rep. David Scott of Atlanta typically likes to get to presidential speeches early so he

can get in the front rows and be among those who greet the president. Tuesday, though, he was deep in the chamber, sitting next to Republican Rep. Phil Gingrey of Marietta. Gingrey apparently made a concession, though: He sat on the Democratic side of the House.